

in which to die!" the coroner said in disparagement of Britz's contention. "Why, it's impossible! I should have detected it the moment I saw the wound."

Britz now produced the enlarged photograph of the wound as well as the needle that he had found on the floor of Whitmore's office.

"It is all very simple—so simple that I eliminated the theory that Whitmore was killed in his office at the very outset of the investigation. The very preparations that were made to delude us contained the evidence of their own clumsy manufacture. Look at the photograph of this wound!" Britz held the photograph edgewise on his desk. "Do you observe the perforations about the edge of the wound? They tell the whole story. That wound had been sewed up and was opened again with this needle." He held up the slim, steel darning needle to the light.

"But why—why should he do this?" broke in the coroner. "It must have been torture!"

"It was," Britz agreed.

"But the loaded pistol on his desk—how do you explain that?"

"I repeat, Whitmore was shot the night before," replied Britz. "It was a mortal wound.